

I N F E R I O R I T Y C O M P L E X

aka. Voyage to the Shoebox Beneath Woody Allen's Bed

~ A New 20-Minute Musical Short ~

Book & Lyrics by
Levres de Sang



C A S T
[in order of appearance]

KAREN LICHFIELD
Psychoanalyst

ERIN X
Box Office Assistant

ELIOT HASTINGS
A pretentious intellectual

MISS AMHURST
Archivist

LLOYD PETERSON
Ventriloquist

FLOYD
Wooden dummy

MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. JUST A TICKET GIRL Erin (w/ Eliot)
 2. I KEEP THEM FOR A RAINY DAY Miss Amhurst
 3. NICE HOTELS, FANCY SUITS Lloyd & Floyd
 4. FRED ASTAIRE IN FUNNY FACE Erin, Eliot & Karen Lichfield
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House lights dim but curtain does NOT rise. KAREN LICHFIELD enters. She addresses the audience.

KAREN LICHFIELD: My name is Karen Lichfield. I'm a psychoanalyst and have my own practice in Midtown Manhattan.
(pause)
 I'd like to introduce you to Erin X – a young woman with a curious condition. Namely, an obsession with the films of Woody Allen.

Curtain rises to...

Act 1, Scene 1

Karen's office. Present day.

Blinds drawn on a tasteful affair decorated with various mid-century pieces. These include a desk and chairs; colonial landscapes; and certificates in matching frames. ERIN is sat at STAGE LEFT. Karen turns and takes the seat beside her desk.

KAREN LICHFIELD: You were saying, Erin...

ERIN: I was saying that his films are a jigsaw of late twentieth and early twenty-first century phobias, fixations, pretensions, paranoias, delusions and the lunacy of trying to exist in our godless, post-capitalist society. And yet there's a missing piece.

KAREN LICHFIELD: How can you be sure?

ERIN: Allen said he's not made a genuine masterpiece -- Like *The Seventh Seal*. He's being hard on himself, but--

A spotlight reveals ELIOT seated at STAGE RIGHT.

ELIOT: I disagree. He simply realized he tells the same jokes over and over.

ERIN: Cause we make the same mistakes over and over.

ELIOT: Yeah, all those mid-life shmucks drowning in self pity cause they developed an irrational fear of dying after their ex-wife doubled the alimony -- We get it.

KAREN LICHFIELD: Eliot, let Erin finish.

ERIN: I was about to say that Allen could have made a *Seventh Seal*, but he held off for some reason.
(*then*)
I'm sure he wrote an outline. If only I could get to it...

KAREN LICHFIELD: Is that possible?

ERIN: Maybe.

KAREN LICHFIELD: Go on...

ERIN: It's inside a shoebox -- A shoebox beneath his bed stuffed with all his unfilmed ideas.

ELIOT: You mean the ones he scrawled on pizza-joint napkins or detachable shirtcuffs; the ones he left alone cause they weren't any good?

KAREN LICHFIELD: (*to Erin*) You'd like to see this outline, wouldn't you?

ERIN: Yes.

KAREN LICHFIELD: Because you work at a downtown arthouse theater?

ERIN: Yes.

KAREN LICHFIELD: Because it's there you endure the likes of Eliot making highbrow allusions?

ELIOT: I don't see how she can view Bob Hope's 'Road to' movies as anything other than post-colonial metaphors.

KAREN LICHFIELD: (*to Erin*) That kind of thing?

ERIN: Yeah, that kinda thing.

KAREN LICHFIELD: And because knowledge of this outline would confer a certain cultural cachet?

ERIN: Yes.

KAREN LICHFIELD: Because of your inferiority complex?

ERIN: Yes.

KAREN LICHFIELD: Why do you feel inferior to Eliot, for example?

ELIOT: Why shouldn't she--?

KAREN LICHFIELD: Eliot, please.
(*to Erin*)
Erin, why do you feel inferior?

ERIN: (*she stands*) Because...

Music #1: JUST A TICKET GIRL [[Listen to DEMO](#)]

ERIN: I DID NOT FINISH WAR AND PEACE
OR VACATION IN ANCIENT GREECE
AS I MAINTAINED.
OPENINGS AT THE MET WERE ALWAYS PRETEND
SONDHEIM COULD NEVER BE MY FRIEND
-- MY STATUS TOO INGRAINED.

I DO NOT OWN A LICHTENSTEIN
OR WRITE IN THE TIMES ON NEW WORLD WINE
AS I HAVE CLAIMED.
I WAS NEVER UNCLE VANYA OR PEER GYNT
SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK? I DID NOT DO A STINT
-- CAN I REALLY BE BLAMED?

I'M JUST THE TICKET GIRL, A WORKING JO
FASCINATED BY...
THE INTELLECTS
I'LL NEVER KNOW
I'M JUST A TICKET GIRL.

Eliot stands. Crosses to center stage.

ELIOT: SHE'S JUST THE TICKET GIRL.

ERIN: I DO NOT JOIN THE MANHATTAN ELITES
IN THE HAMPTONS OR AT WELLNESS RETREATS
IT'S ALL A BLUFF.
AS FOR OPERETTA AND BALLET
I WAS NEVER AU FAIT
-- THESE CLIFF NOTES SUIT ME WELL ENOUGH.

I'M JUST THE TICKET GIRL, A WORKING JO
FASCINATED BY...
THE INTELLECT
I'LL NEVER KNOW
I'M JUST A TICKET GIRL

ELIOT: SHE'S JUST A TICKET GIRL

ERIN: I'M JUST THE TICKET GIRL

ERIN & ELIOT: A TICKETY TICKET GIRL.

Erin and Eliot return to their seats. Karen Lichfield opens her desk-drawer and takes out a decorative ivory ball attached to a chain. She proceeds to swing it back and forth in front of Erin who follows the pendulum-like motion...

KAREN LICHFIELD: (*to Erin*) On the count of three you will
find yourself beneath Woody Allen's bed.
(*pause*)
One... Two... Three.

Lights dim and come up on...

Act 1, Scene 2

Beneath Woody Allen's bed.

Classic movie postcards do battle with domestic paraphernalia that includes a scale model of a Japanese WWII Zero fighter; a slightly deflated adult doll with platinum-blond wig; and several plastic figures from 1960s cereal packets. Erin wanders among them. Under hypnosis.

ERIN: Wowza! I feel like I know this place...

MISS AMHURST enters.

MISS AMHURST: If you want to see inside the shoebox you must answer three questions.

ERIN: Whatever for--?

MISS AMHURST: Because I'm a version of yourself.

ERIN: So this is a Shoebox Office!

MISS AMHURST: I prefer archive. Either way, you must answer the questions.

ERIN: But I don't set quizzes at the theater. They just buy a ticket.

MISS AMHURST: Like I said, I'm only a *version* of you. My job is different.

ERIN: In what way?

Music #2: I KEEP THEM FOR A RAINY DAY [[Listen to Demo](#)]

MISS AMHURST: HE KNOWS I WILL ALWAYS BE HERE
BY THE PENTHOUSE AND PLAYBOYS
FADING LIKE HIS READER'S DIGEST
AND SCANDINAVIAN SEX TOYS.

HE KNOWS IT'S A TERMITE CAUSEWAY
FROM HIS CROSSWORD PUZZLE BEACHES
TO THE NOVELTIES AND DUST
MRS. SILVERMAN RARELY REACHES.

I KEEP THEM FOR A RAINY DAY
ALL HIS ABSURDIST NOTIONS
ALL HIS CURIOUS, BITTERSWEET EMOTIONS
-- THESE UNWRITTEN SCREENPLAYS
I KEEP FOR HIS RAINY DAYS.

HE NEVER PAYS ME A DIME
IT'S NOT CLOUD ENCRYPTION
JUST A CARDBOARD HOUSE FOR PLIMSOLLS

MISS AMHURST (CONT'D):

MY EXISTENCE THIS COMIC CONTRADICTION.

I KEEP THEM FOR A RAINY DAY
 ALL HIS ABSURDIST NOTIONS
 ALL HIS CURIOUS, BITTERSWEET EMOTIONS
 -- THESE UNWRITTEN SCREENPLAYS
 I KEEP FOR HIS RAINY DAYS.

A speechless Erin applauds...

MISS AMHURST: First question: Why does Mr. Allen make films?

ERIN: Easy! To distract himself from the inevitability of death.

MISS AMHURST: Correct.
 (*pause*)
 Second question: *Annie Hall* was originally going to be called *Anhedonia*. What is anhedonia?

ERIN: Err...

MISS AMHURST: Three, two, one--

ERIN: Wait! It's being unable to experience joy.

MISS AMHURST: Correct. But know you avoided disqualification by point-three of a second.
 (*pause*)
 Final question: What would you do with a large polo mallet?

ERIN: Ooh, I'd have it mounted in one of those clear boxes, hang it in the Guggenheim, and call it *Late Twentieth Century Joke: Endangered Species*.

MISS AMHURST: I'll take that.
 (*pause*)
 Congratulations!

Suddenly, a spotlight illuminates a giant SHOEBOX...! A wooden step-ladder leans against one side.

ERIN: The shoebox!

MISS AMHURST: You may select three ideas. Although you must wear this blindfold.

Miss Amhurst stands behind Erin and slips a silk BLINDFOLD over her eyes before guiding her to the foot of the step-ladder. Erin climbs the step-ladder, reaches into the shoebox and holds out a quarter-page torn from a legal pad.

ERIN: ('reading') A musical comedy about a mix-up at a takeout in downtown Pyongyang. The Supreme Leader orders Singapore noodles, but winds up with Beef Hong Kong style.
(pause)
Note to self: They'll love it in the flyover states.

Erin returns the quarter-page to Miss Amhurst before reaching into the shoebox again. She pulls out a brown envelope.

ERIN: ('reading') A Strindberg-esque drama in which a doomsday prepper's wife runs off with a Philippino dentist.
(pause)
Note to self: Go easy on the root-canal gags.

Erin hands the brown envelope to Miss Amhurst before reaching into the shoebox for a third time. She pulls out a theatrical handbill and turns it over.

ERIN: ('reading') *Goodbye Lillian* -- Story of Lloyd Peterson. A ventriloquist torn between his dummy, Floyd, and his kooky ex-wife, Lillian.
(pause)
Note to self: Shoot in black and white.
(realizing)
This is the one!

Lights dim and we remain in darkness until...

Act 1, Scene 3

Karen's office.

LLOYD PETERSON is sat at STAGE LEFT. Karen Lichfield sits opposite.

KAREN LICHFIELD: You're saying Floyd wrote the new routine by himself -- That you didn't throw your voice?

LLOYD: No! I mean, I've done that whole 'the wooden guy really said that' thing; but this time he hit them with some joke about a Catholic priest in Guatemala.

KAREN LICHFIELD: You resent his material going down well?

LLOYD: I'm not sure what my role is any more? And then there's the financial side.

KAREN LICHFIELD: Have you discussed it with him?

LLOYD: I tried. He said I should be pleased.

KAREN LICHFIELD: Did you ask Lillian for advice?

LLOYD: Yeah... Once she got past her "I told you this would happen" schtick, she said I should burn him and start over with a new dummy.

KAREN LICHFIELD: Might you do that?

LLOYD: I think about it all the time.
(*pause*)
I imagine going to some out of the way place and buying a box of matches; then next day I'd go to the hardware store and buy a can of gasoline -- Maybe throw in a couple of ant-traps to not look so conspicuous.
(*pause*)
Lillian said she'd drive me to some waste ground... and then I realize--

Suddenly, a spotlight illuminates FLOYD; perched on a shelf at STAGE RIGHT.

FLOYD: And then you realize you're not Don
Corleone.
(*then*)
Face it, Lloyd, you're a washed-up,
middle-aged ventriloquist. You need me
-- And then there's the forensic
investigation. Perpetrators always leave
behind some tell-tale clue.

LLOYD: (*he stands*) So what are you telling me...?

Music #3: NICE HOTELS, FANCY SUITS[\[Listen to Demo\]](#)

FLOYD: I WANT FIFTY PERCENT; AN EVEN SHARE
YOU'D BE SUCH A STIFF IF I WASN'T THERE
BESIDES, I ALWAYS GET THE BIGGER LAUGH
YOU KNOW YOU SHOULD GIVE ME HALF.

LLOYD: YOU DO OKAY; GREAT, IN FACT
THINGS WERE NEVER MEANT TO BE EXACT
WE SLEEP IN NICE HOTELS, WEAR FANCY SUITS
LET'S KEEP AWAY FROM ABSOLUTES.

FLOYD: I APPRECIATE THAT; I REALLY DO
BUT THOSE PILLS WON'T BE ENOUGH TO SEE YOU THRU
THE NEW ROUTINE NEEDS MORE WORK
AND LATELY YOU'VE BEEN SUCH A JERK.

LLOYD: I CAN'T BELIEVE...
HELL, MY NERVES ARE SHOT
I GOT LILLIAN
HER TAROT DECK AND CABLE TV SLOT.

FLOYD: YOU SAID YOU REALLY SAW
A SHOOTER IN THE THIRD
SURE WAS THE DARNEDEST THING
I EVER HEARD
YOU CAN'T DO THE ACT IF YOUR MIND WILL STRAY
LET ME REPLACE YOU WITH VICTOR CARRAWAY.

LLOYD: (*spoken*) You wouldn't do that!

LLOYD (CONT'D): I NEED THAT FRISSON WHEN THE HOUSE LIGHTS
DIM
WHILE OTHER GUYS SING OR PLAY VIOLIN
I THROW MY VOICE ALMOST ANY PLACE
-- JUST GIVE ME A VELVET CURTAIN
GIVE ME AN EMPTY SPACE.
I DON'T CARE WHERE WE GO
OUT OF TOWN
OR SALMON RIVER, IDAHO
WHERE FOR AN HOUR I CAN FEEL LIKE GOD
I COULD NEVER DO A DAYTIME JOB.

LLOYD: (*spoken*) I got fired from that insurance firm
after three days for not being Edward G.
Robinson -- Who knew there were guys who
could recite every last exclusion on a
minor injury claim.

FLOYD: I WANT FIFTY PERCENT; WHAT I DESERVE
YOU CAN'T HOLD IT ALL IN RESERVE
AS FOR THOSE JOKES I WROTE MYSELF
CLEVELAND SAID "DON'T LEAVE THEM ON THE SHELF".

LLOYD: WE CAN TALK ABOUT IT ANOTHER TIME
I'M NOT USED TO COUNTING EVERY DIME
CAUSE A NICE HOTEL AND A FANCY SUIT
SURE BEATS THE LEGAL ROUTE.

FLOYD: YOU CAN'T DO THE ACT IF YOUR MIND WILL STRAY

LLOYD: HELL, MY NERVES ARE SHOT!

FLOYD: LET ME REPLACE YOU WITH VICTOR CARRAWAY.

LLOYD: You wouldn't...

FLOYD: (*to analyst*) I think that will be all for today,
Karen. You can charge this session to
my account.

Lights dim and come up on...

Act 1, Scene 4

Karen's Office.

At STAGE LEFT Karen Lichfield puts the ivory ball back inside her desk drawer and turns to Erin; sat opposite and still under hypnosis.

KAREN LICHFIELD: On the count of three...
 (*pause*)
 One...
 (*pause*)
 You will wake from your trance and find yourself back in my office.
 (*pause*)
 Two...
 (*pause*)
 Midway through our session.
 (*pause*)
 Three.

ERIN: Jeez, I musta zoned out for a moment.

KAREN LICHFIELD: You'd mentioned a missing piece?

ERIN: I now wonder if it'd be any more or less brilliant than Allen's existing work?

A spotlight reveals Eliot sat at STAGE RIGHT.

ELIOT: Clearly, she's crushed by her realization that Allen isn't sitting on any masterpieces.

A second spotlight reveals FLOYD – still perched on that shelf at STAGE RIGHT.

FLOYD: Who's this blowhard?

Lloyd enters.

LLOYD: (*to Floyd*) What did I say about insulting people?

FLOYD: He deserved it! He's the reason for that woman being here in the first place -- Besides, we're a masterpiece in waiting.

LLOYD: Only Mr. Allen won't do anything with us cause--

FLOYD: He always winds up with indigestion the minute he types "Fade In".

LLOYD: Cause you're so downright argumentative.

FLOYD: Who's fault is that?

Miss Amhurst enters.

MISS AMHURST: I'm sorry about this. They keep escaping. I'll put them back inside the shoebox.
(*to Lloyd & Floyd*)
Come on.

Floyd hops down from the shelf and takes Miss Amhurst's hand. They exit. Lloyd follows.

LLOYD (turning to all): I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

Lloyd exits.

ELIOT: An instructive scene.

KAREN LICHFIELD: How so...?

ELIOT: It proves my point. Namely, that the artist *chooses* to create. Ergo, if he creates bad art, it's either mismanagement or lack of talent. And those clowns were the definition of bad art.

ERIN: Whadda you mean? They were terrific!
(*pause*)
They represent the artist laughing at himself: his self-destructive impulse; his own misfortune -- It's why Allen writes comedy.

ELIOT: Misfortune implies he ran into some bad luck.

ERIN: Luck, good or bad -- It's like art. A part of life. And what's true of life is true of art. We fail all the time. But you gotta try. Allen's always said that. And if you think of his comedy as the *human* comedy... I'm quoting Balzac, but who better? The guy killed himself by drinking too much Italian coffee -- I mean, we can never master our own lives. It's all too random and crazy.
(*pause*)
Wait a minute...!
(*she stands*)
Whether the ideas in that shoebox could be masterpieces or not is unimportant. Their embryonic existence is enough. They represent all the things we *can* be...

Music #4: FRED ASTAIRE IN FUNNY FACE [[Listen to Demo](#)]

ERIN: I CAN BE FRED ASTAIRE IN FUNNY FACE
YOU CAN BE BOGART IN A LONELY PLACE
I CAN DRINK TEA WITH GENERAL YEN
YOU CAN EXPOSE ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN
-- I CAN FREQUENT A BAKERY IN MONCEAU
YOU CAN BUMBLE LIKE MONSIEUR HULOT
WE CAN BE STRANGERS ON A TRAIN
INDULGE IN CHINESE ROULETTE AGAIN.

Eliot stands. Crosses to center stage.

ELIOT: I CAN BE THOSE EYES WITHOUT A FACE
ERIN: A COUNTRY PRIEST COMPREHENDING GRACE
ELIOT: I CAN SPEND SUNDAYS WITH CYBELE
ERIN: CHASTISE MOTHER AT THE BATES MOTEL
ELIOT: -- I CAN BE YOUR AMERICAN FRIEND
ERIN: A TAXI DRIVER GOING AROUND THE BEND
ELIOT: WE CAN SAY A LONG GOODBYE
ERIN: ENJOY FAST TIMES AT RIDGEMONT HIGH.

Karen Lichfield stands. Crosses to center stage.

KAREN LICHFIELD: WE'LL CRY AT EVERY MATINEE WHERE NOTHING IS
HIT OR MISS
AND LIFE GOES GREAT WITH ARTIFICE.

KAREN LICHFIELD (CONT'D):

WE'LL CATCH EVERY EVENING SHOW SO TIME CAN
BE DELAYED
CAUSE DEATH IS THE THING OF WHICH WE'RE
MOST AFRAID.

ERIN:

I CAN BE FRED ASTAIRE IN FUNNY FACE
INTONE "I'M SORRY, DAVE" IN OUTER SPACE
I CAN CHANGE MY SEX IN A YEAR OF THIRTEEN MOONS
EXIST UNDERGROUND BESIDE THE WOMAN OF THE DUNES
-- I CAN RAISE THE RED LANTERN IN REGAL PEKING
DRY MELANCHOLY TEARS FROM THE LAST SNOWS OF
SPRING
WE MAY EVEN FIND THE AVIATOR'S WIFE
AND SOMEDAY RECLAIM A STOLEN LIFE.

ERIN, ELIOT& KAREN LICHFIELD:

WE'LL CRY AT EVERY MATINEE WHERE NOTHING IS
HIT OR MISS
AND LIFE GOES GREAT WITH ARTIFICE.
WE'LL CATCH EVERY EVENING SHOW SO TIME CAN
BE DELAYED
CAUSE DEATH IS THE THING OF WHICH WE'RE MOST
AFRAID...
CAUSE DEATH IS THE THING OF WHICH WE'RE MOST
AFRAID.

CURTAIN.